

BILL ANALYSIS

S.B. 172
By: Carona
Public Education
Committee Report (Unamended)

BACKGROUND AND PURPOSE

Interested parties note that, currently, when children enter kindergarten, many do not have the skills necessary to be successful in school. The parties also note that kindergarten teachers carry the burden of teaching a classroom of children with significantly varying skills but may lack the tools necessary to identify the strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in learning in order to remediate and intervene appropriately.

Current law requires school districts to assess the reading development and comprehension of students in kindergarten through second grade. Interested parties have expressed concern that the literacy tests used by many districts to measure kindergarten readiness do not adequately test other skills that research has shown to be significant indicators of readiness, such as numeracy, language and communication, and social and emotional development. The parties contend that a multidimensional assessment tool that evaluates literacy as well as other indicators could be an advantageous tool for educators to better identify strengths, weaknesses, and gaps in learning; strengthen educational programs; and focus curricula to better meet students' needs.

S.B. 172 seeks to provide for multidimensional assessment tools that measure kindergarten readiness.

RULEMAKING AUTHORITY

It is the committee's opinion that this bill does not expressly grant any additional rulemaking authority to a state officer, department, agency, or institution.

ANALYSIS

S.B. 172 amends the Education Code to require the commissioner of education, for use in diagnosing the reading development and comprehension of kindergarten students, to include at least two multidimensional assessment tools on the commissioner's list of reading instruments that a school may use to diagnose student reading development and comprehension. The bill requires a multidimensional assessment tool on the commissioner's list to either include a reading instrument and test at least three developmental skills, including literacy, or test at least two developmental skills, other than literacy, and be administered in conjunction with a separate reading instrument that is on the commissioner's list. The bill clarifies that a multidimensional assessment tool that is so administered is considered to be a reading instrument for purposes of diagnosing student reading development and comprehension. The bill's provisions apply beginning with the 2013-2014 school year.

EFFECTIVE DATE

On passage, or, if the bill does not receive the necessary vote, September 1, 2013.